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ABSTRACT

This study examined the opinions of 44 teacher education majors, prior to student teaching, about the state of public education in the United States. It also investigated their perceptions of the opinions of faculty and practicing teachers regarding the same issue. The study examined the degree of multicultural instruction and the method by which the students received the instruction. Students completed a three-part self-report survey. The first section sought their opinions about problems and solutions facing U.S. public education and asked students to recall what their teacher education faculty and practicing teachers expressed about problems facing public schools. The second section asked about students' diversity training and opinions about discrimination in the United States. The third section requested demographic information. Results indicated that students' own perceptions and opinions closely matched those of faculty and teachers, who ranked economic issues as the main problem in U.S. public education. Students ranked social/emotional or diversity issues as the second problem. This was in direct contrast to their perceptions of the opinions of faculty and teachers, who they believed would rank parental/family issues second and social/emotional and diversity issues last. The results also showed that students did not receive the instructional methods that research has shown are necessary to facilitate change in opinions and behavior. (Contains 26 references.) (Author/SM)

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The State of Public Education in the United States:

Teacher Education Students' Perspectives

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Running Head: TEACHER EDUCATION PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to elicit the opinions of teacher education majors, prior to student teaching, about the state of public education in the United States as well as their perceptions of the opinions of faculty and practicing teachers regarding the same issue through the use of a self-report survey. An analysis of the data showed that their own perceptions and opinions closely matched those of faculty and teachers who ranked economic issues as the main problem in public education in the United States. However, the data showed that the education majors ranked social/emotional or diversity issues as the second problem. This finding was in direct contrast to the students' perceptions of the opinions of the faculty and the practicing teachers whom the students believed would rank parental/family issues as second and social/emotional and diversity issues as last. Additionally, how these education majors were taught was researched. Data analysis showed that students did not receive the instructional methods shown by research as necessary to facilitate a change in opinions and behaviors.

The State of Public Education in the United States: Teacher Education Students' Perspectives

The face of education and the makeup of the classroom have changed dramatically over the years, with today's teachers facing more culturally and socially diverse students than ever before. Demographic trends in the United States suggest that those ethnic groups once classified as minorities are slowly becoming the majority population in many of the largest states. The National Center for Education Statistics (1995) reported that the enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools by race/ethnicity has changed drastically over the past 20 years. White enrollment has decreased by 9.3% while minority enrollment has increased by the same percentage, most notably the Hispanic enrollment with a 5.1% increase. In fact, nonwhite students form the majority in the 25 largest school districts in America, and it is estimated that by the year 2010, they will form the largest population group in over 50 major American cities (Tran, Young, & Di Lella, 1994). It is also estimated that 20% of students come from families who live at or below the poverty level. The traditional family make up has given way to an increase in single parent homes, extended families, and blended families.

With all of these changes in the school population, the need for a better understanding of diversity, as well as an awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of our present educational system, become apparent. For years, our nation has been inundated with statistics "proving" that the American education system is not servicing its

students properly (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). The United States is reported to be far behind academically in almost every subject when compared to countries around the world. While this may not be true, how teachers view their nonwhite students affects teacher/student interactions, thereby influencing the practices of teachers, teacher educators, and administrators.

A review of the literature suggests that teacher education majors be exposed to diversity training, field experiences, and instructional strategies designed to permanently change and enhance their opinions and behaviors. Awareness of the information that current teacher education majors are receiving is an important tool in understanding their level of preparedness prior to entering diverse public school settings. The purpose of this study was to elicit information from current teacher education majors about their opinions of the state of public education in the United States, as well as their perceptions of the opinions on these same issues of the faculty members and practicing teachers with whom they had worked. Both the degree of multicultural instruction and the method by which the students received the instruction are examined in this study.

Review of Literature

Not only the content but also the methodology of the teacher education curriculum are critical in affecting the outcome behaviors and attitudes of new teachers. Preparing teachers for diversity has become a necessity, yet research has shown such preparation has not become a priority (Cannella & Reiff, 1994; Chavez & others, 1992;

Montecinos, 1994; Ross & Smith, 1992; Tran, Young, & Di Lella, 1994). Instruction in multicultural education during preservice preparation could change preconceived perceptions that students may have toward ethnicity and diversity.

Ideally, teacher education students should be taught in a field-based curriculum, meaning that the student should attend methods classes in elementary and secondary school settings that are co-taught by university staff and practicing teachers (Grant & Koskela, 1986). Instruction in diversity issues should be included in all courses and should include methods that change attitudes and behaviors.

Diversity training in teacher preparation programs has both proponents and opponents. Proponents believe that the benefits are enormous and will better enable preservice teachers to nurture and to provide more effective instruction to students with diverse cultural and social backgrounds (Cannella & Reiff, 1994; Feng, 1994; MacPhee, Kreutzer, & Fritz, 1994; Montecinos, 1994; Ross & Smith, 1992; Tran, Young, & Di Lella, 1994) Opponents, however, believe that diversity training makes no real difference in the ways teachers work with students (Chavez, & others, 1994; Grant & Koskela, 1986).

Supporters of multicultural education are concerned not only about the presence of diversity training in teacher education programs, but also about the content of that training (Cannella & Reiff, 1994; Chiang, 1994; MacPhee, Kreutzer, & Fritz, 1994; Montecinos, 1994; Suleiman, 1996). Teacher preparation programs may, on the surface, provide the student with multicultural classes, yet the content of these classes may be

insufficient to prepare the student for dealing with diversity in the classroom. Diversity training must not only address the idea of individual differences but must also nurture the beliefs and develop the skills that will foster greater opportunities for the children these future teachers will instruct. Suleiman (1996) suggested that teacher education programs should prepare prospective teachers to confront their prejudices and biases, present the history of the American educational system from a multicultural and pluralistic perspective, prepare teachers to become multicultural advocates in a pluralistic classroom, and train teachers to be flexible in teaching. Cooper, Beare and Thorman (1990) reminded educators that as long ago as 1973 the Commission on Multicultural Education had declared, "Multicultural education programs for teachers are more than special courses grafted onto the standard program. The commitment to cultural pluralism must permeate all areas of the educational experience provided for prospective teachers" (p. 1). Cannella and Reiff (1994), through their study of one teacher education student and her experiences with diversity instruction concluded that, "Cultural differences are threatening and intercultural communications are awkward to those who have not had diverse experiences. Multicultural teacher education should help preservice teachers learn to create educational objectives and environments that facilitate and empower, rather than repress and discriminate" (p. 33).

Not everyone, however, believes in the benefits of diversity training. Tran, Young, and Di Lella (1994) cite two studies which found that diversity training had little or no positive effect on changing students' stereotypical attitudes toward ethnic groups.

Amodeo and Martin (1982) and McDiarmid (1992) found that diversity training offered no benefits but, in fact, confused the situation by making teachers aware of differences when the teachers merely wanted to treat students respectfully rather than differently. Chavez and others (1994), in a critique of the diversity training class offered at the institution where they taught, found that their multicultural education course had little effect on changing students' perspectives. Grant and Secada (1990) also found that for most students, multicultural education has little effect. It must be noted, however, that each of these studies was conducted over short periods of time (six months or less) and with small test groups. Therefore, although these limited studies indicate some dissent, the majority of the research indicates that providing diversity training to teacher education students benefits the student and, once that student is a practicing teacher, his or her students benefit as well.

A question that begs answering, then, concerns the effectiveness of teacher education programs that claim to provide training in diversity and multiculturalism. In a study by Grant and Koskela (1986), student teachers stated that the information they received about multicultural instruction concerned individual differences among children rather than race, sex, and class differences and the inequalities promoted because of these more specific differences. In studying six preservice teachers who had been given some multicultural instruction, Ross and Smith (1992) found that the students came away with the idea that the curriculum and the individual teacher's instructional methods were the driving forces in creating low achievement among diverse learners rather than the context

of schooling, the working conditions of the teacher, or the social context in the United States. In fact, of the six students studied, three were perceived by the authors to be unwilling or unable to teach in a multicultural setting.

More positively, however, a number of researchers, Ross and Smith (1992), MacPhee, Kruetzer, and Fritz (1994), and Locke (1988), for example, have developed and implemented successful curricula that exposed their students to diversity and effected their students' understanding and acceptance of diversity. Such results permit the conclusion that diversity training can, indeed, be effective.

Another practice that is thought to be of immense help is that of field-based education, as mentioned earlier in this section (Briscoe & others, 1989; Byrd & Garafalo, 1982; Cooper, Beare, & Thorman, 1990; Grant & Koskela, 1986; Pigge & Marso, 1992; Reeves-Kazelskis & King, 1994; Wilson, 1994). Any experiences a teacher education student has outside of the college classroom, such as observations, practica and student teaching, are helpful. Ideally, however, field-based education involves teacher education students attending classes that are conducted in elementary or secondary school settings that are co-taught by university instructors and practicing teachers. The students would attend class for part of the session and work in the classrooms applying what they had learned for the rest of the session. Unfortunately, this method of instruction does not appear to be widely used. In fact, 19 out of the 50 states require that the first and only field experience be student teaching (Stein, 1990). Stein also discovered that the other 31 states require some clinical hours that involve either observing or actually working with

children, yet the number of hours required varies from 40 to 300 clock hours, depending upon location.

Research has shown that increasing the number of field experiences has enormous benefits (Byrd & Garafolo, 1982; Cooper, Beare, & Thorman, 1990; Pigge and Marso, 1992; Wilson, 1994). As in multicultural training, the methods used in field experiences are very important. In an evaluation by Janell Wilson (1994) that described preservice teachers' field experiences, it was found that effectiveness increases with "field experiences that are clearly defined, logically sequenced with a pattern of slow introduction into the clinical sites, and are planned for and practiced before implementation" (p. 2).

Including multicultural education and field experiences in the curriculum will help prepare teacher education majors for the classrooms of today. But one additional issue must be addressed: The use of instructional methods designed to change students' attitudes and behaviors. This issue is critical because, as Grant and Secada (1990) found, "Research suggests that students' attitudes do change while participating in a multicultural course but that change diminishes as time passes" (p. 404). Certain instructional methods have been found to change students' attitudes permanently.

The Psychology of Attitudes, by Alice H. Eagly and Shelly Chiaken (1993), discusses ways in which attitudes may be permanently changed. The book covers the four families of attitude-change theory including theories about relatively simple affective processes, persuasion, the impact of one's own behavior, and social influences. Practicing

any one of these theories would include using distinctive experimental models, presenting simple stimuli over time, presenting a message containing complex arguments favoring a position that counters the position being changed, introducing counterattitudinal behavior, or influencing using simple messages presented by other people who are present in a small group setting.

Through their research, Eagly and Chiaken found that the use of role playing, guest speakers, case studies, visits to diverse communities and other activities which require the student to be personally involved had a more permanent effect on the attitudes and behaviors of students and were, therefore, recommended. Lectures, readings on the subject, and other passive activities were not recommended nor found to have any significant contribution to attitude and behavior change.

It is hardly profound to suggest that teachers' attitudes and behaviors play an enormous role in the success of the diverse students in the classroom. Thus changing negative attitudes and behaviors to conform to others' expectations or changing them to conform to evidence about the nature of reality becomes paramount to ensuring the sensitivity of new teachers. If an attempt is not made to change students' negative or indifferent attitudes or behaviors, then all the instruction in diversity and multiculturalism will not make a significant difference. Today's teachers need to know more than how to deliver instruction. They need to know how to relate socially and emotionally to every student in their classes so that each child is given an opportunity to learn and excel. This information included in a curriculum with diversity training and field experiences can

create effective teachers for all students and improve the state of public education in the United States.

Methods

This study was developed to determine the opinions of teacher education majors, prior to student teaching, regarding the state of public education in the United States and their opinions concerning diversity training. A self- report survey created for this study consisted of questions designed to elicit the education major's views on the state of public education in the United States.

The survey was divided into three sections. The first section sought the subjects' opinions about problems and solutions facing American public education, the second section contained questions regarding the student's diversity training, and the third requested demographic information. The first section used open-ended questions to elicit the subject's opinions about the problems inherent in public education and some possible solutions. The subjects were asked to describe what they believed were the problems facing public schools in the United States, as well as what they recalled their teacher education faculty and practicing teachers expressing or discussing as problems facing public schools. The subjects were then asked to describe what they had concluded as solutions for the problems they identified, as well as any solutions discussed by their teacher education faculty or practicing teachers.

The second section asked about the subjects' diversity training and their opinions about discrimination in the United States. Subjects were asked to respond in the

affirmative or negative to a question about whether discrimination and/or prejudice plays a role in the opinion that there are problems with public education in the United States, and to another question about whether they had had a specific course in multicultural education or diversity as part of their teacher education programs. Subjects were asked about their experiences in diversity training. This section was presented in a checklist format in which subjects were asked to check all that applied, from the list presented to them, of the topics, information, and experiences they had encountered in their course(s).

The site chosen to distribute these surveys was an upper division midwestern university where most education courses are taught at the college or university with students assigned to teaching methods labs at separate sites in public schools for two semesters prior to student teaching. The university requires no formal multicultural or diversity training course be taken for graduation. The state where the university is located requires no multicultural or diversity training course be taken for certification but rather requires a course be taken in nonwestern cultures. (Any course ranging from Contemporary Native American Literature to Asian History fulfills this requirement.) The study was distributed by instructors to students in four randomly selected second semester teaching methods lab courses. Three of the sections consisted of students in the elementary education program and the fourth consisted of early childhood education majors. The subjects were asked to complete and return the survey to their professor, were assured that all answers would be confidential, and received no payment for their participation. Participation was voluntary. In all, 50 surveys were distributed and 44

were returned.

Results

The sample was 73% White, 21% Black, and 2% each of Hispanic, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Asian or Pacific Islander. The students surveyed ranged in age from 20 to 45, with the average age being 28.5 years. The indicated political preference was 57% Democrat, 9% Republican, 14% Independent, and 2% Other, with 18% not responding to that item. The number of hours remaining until the subjects began student teaching ranged from 0 to 32, with 8.43 being the average. Over 75% of the subjects in this study were within one semester (full-time equivalent) of student teaching. Thirty-eight females and six males returned surveys.

Questions regarding opinions about problems and their solutions in United States public schools were open-ended. Responses were analyzed by the researcher and a second faculty member for content. Responses were subsequently classified into five general categories. The categories developed were as follows (with examples of response types):

1) *Economic Issues*: Funding; equity in funding; federal/state mandates (unfunded); poverty

2) *Parental/Family Issues*: Parental involvement; communication with parents; cooperation between teachers and parents; absenteeism and truancy; mobility; lack of parents/family imparting of moral values; decline of families and family values

3) *Social/Emotional or Diversity Issues*: Lack of diversity; tolerance/discrimination; lack of respect; discipline problems from lack of the aforementioned; safety concerns; gang affiliation; drugs

4) *Institutional Issues*: Class size; lack of communication between teachers and administrators; tenure; administrative support; lack of professional development; planning and instruction time constraints

5) *Educational/Pedagogical Issues*: Lack of active engagement; lack of communication between teachers and students; lack of hands-on/discovery methods of teaching; teacher burn out; lazy teachers; cooperative grouping (only for solution); classroom management

The primary researcher then coded the responses into one of the five categories. Responses were also coded by the second reader independently and checked for inter-rater reliability. Agreement was 97%. Disagreements were decided by the more senior faculty member. Both problems and solutions used the same codes. The percent of responses for the five categories are presented in Table 1.

The personal opinions of the students matched closest with the perceived faculty opinions in most instances. However, the students believed that problems with the public schools were due in the most part to social/emotional or diversity issues and in the least part to parental/family issues. These opinions were in direct contrast to the students'

perceptions of the opinions of the faculty and the practicing teachers. While economic issues were ranked highest by all three groups, only the perceived faculty opinions and the perceived practicing teachers opinions ranked educational/pedagogical issues as the lowest. Solutions to the problems addressed were consistent between the opinions of the students and the perceptions by the students of the faculty opinions.

Table 1

Categorical Responses to Opinion Questions Expressed in Percents

Group	1 Economic Issues	2 Parental/ Family Issues	3 Social/ Emotional or Diversity Issues	4 Institutional Issues	5 Educational/ Pedagogical Issues	Missing (no response)
A						
Problems	34.00	21.00	9.00	11.00	9.00	16.00
Solutions	13.50	7.00	9.00	16.00	13.50	41.00
B						
Problems	23.00	27.00	11.00	14.00	7.00	18.00
Solutions	5.00	9.00	9.00	9.00	5.00	63.00
C						
Problems	27.00	14.00	29.00	14.00	16.00	0.00
Solutions	27.00	11.00	16.00	11.00	21.00	13.00

Note. Groups: A: Perceived Faculty Opinions; B: Perceived Practicing Teachers Opinions; C: Education Majors' Opinions.

Questions regarding the subjects' opinions about discrimination in the United States and their diversity training were presented in a checklist format. Respondents were asked whether they thought discrimination and/or prejudice plays a role in the opinions that there are problems with public education in the United States: 64% replied in the

affirmative and 36% replied in the negative. Of those surveyed, 79% indicated that they had not received any formal multicultural or diversity training in their program, 14% indicated that they had received some formal training, and 7% did not respond to this probe. Respondents were asked to check from a list of 12 items the types of instruction they had received in any of their education courses. Responses were coded as either yes or no. The response rate, expressed in percent, for the 12 items is presented in Table 2.

The most utilized topics of instruction regarding diverse students appear to be learning styles, teacher expectations and attitudes, and tracking/ability grouping biases. The least utilized methods appear to be seminars, visits to diverse areas within the community, and guest speakers. This finding is in direct contrast to the four instructional methods indicated in the review of the literature as being more effective in attitude and behavior change (role playing, guest speakers, case studies, and visits to diverse communities). Role playing was indicated by 59% of the students as being a method they were exposed to, guest speakers indicated by 32%, case studies indicated by 50%, and visits to diverse areas indicated by 29% of the students. Therefore, role playing and case studies appear to be the most utilized of the more effective methods of instruction, but significantly, none of the four most effective methods was among the most utilized. Analysis of the opinion responses by age, ethnicity, political preference, and credit hours remaining found no significant difference on any response except perceived faculty opinion about problems with public education. Responses to this variable were significantly different based upon the ethnicity of the subject. The contingency

coefficient statistic was utilized ($\underline{C}$ (35) = 0.6786, $p < .0113$). Visual examination of the data indicates that Whites tended to indicate economic or parental issues as the main perceived faculty problem and minorities were more diverse with a higher rate of response toward diversity, institutional, and pedagogical issues. Actual counts are presented in Table 3.

Table 2

Received Type of Instruction Regarding Diverse Students by Percents

Topic/Activity Experience	Percents	
	Received	Not Received
Assessment biases	59.00	41.00
Tracking/ability grouping biases	70.50	29.50
Learning styles	91.00	9.00
Teacher expectations and attitudes	82.00	18.00
Role playing	59.00	41.00
Case studies	50.00	50.00
Movies and videos	68.00	32.00
Readings on student diversity	59.00	41.00
Lectures on prejudice and discrimination	43.00	57.00
Seminars	25.00	75.00
Visits to diverse areas within the community	29.50	70.50
Guest speakers	32.00	68.00

Table 3 shows that 52% of the White students surveyed perceived the faculty to

believe that economic issues were the main problem with public education. Conversely, only 1 out of 9 Black students felt the same. No White student perceived that the faculty believed education or pedagogical issues were the problem, yet at least one out of each of the other ethnic groups felt differently. In fact, the only Hispanic and the only American Indian or Alaskan Native surveyed perceived these issues to be the problem in the eyes of the faculty. The student who indicated "other" was White and American Indian and indicated that he felt the same as the other White students.

Table 3

Raw Count Data for Perceived Faculty Problems by Ethnicity

Problem	Ethnicity				
	White	Black	Hispanic	AmerInd or Alaskan	Other
Economic Issues	13.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Parental/Family Issues	8.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Social/Emotional or Diversity Issues	1.00	3.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Institutional Issues	3.00	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Educational/Pedagogical Issues	0.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	0.00

Note. The subject that checked "other" indicated he was White and American Indian.

Discussion

As Table 1 indicates, there is a significant difference in the comparison of student opinions with those they perceived of faculty and practicing teachers. It might be expected that the opinions of the students would be very close to the perceived opinions

of the faculty since that the students sampled had not yet begun student teaching. Analysis of each of the issues indicates that this is not the case.

All three groups agreed that economic issues rank high as a problem with public schools, yet the percentage of perceived faculty opinions is much higher than the perceived practicing teacher opinions and the student opinions. This result can be due to the fact that the university where this study was conducted is in a middle class area of the state. The review of the literature has shown that practicing teachers and students tend to remain geographically close to areas with which they are familiar. The faculty of this university, however, comes from many different economic backgrounds and is expected to have more personal experience with diversity and funding issues. It is, therefore, not surprising that this issue was perceived by the students as the faculty's leading cause of the problems facing public education in the United States.

Further examination of the data contained in Table 1 shows that the second issue, parent and family involvement, had a high percentage of positive responses both in the areas of perceived faculty and perceived practicing teacher opinions. This finding is not surprising, mainly because practicing teachers and faculty have experience interacting with parents that teacher education majors do not. What is surprising, however, is that the opinions of the students are considerably lower when compared to the other percentages. Perceived practicing teacher opinions are higher than the perceived faculty opinions, as may be expected. Yet, the students rank this issue almost 50% lower than the perceived opinions of the practicing teachers and about 33% lower than the perceived

faculty opinions. This result may be expected to change, however, as the teacher education students begin student teaching.

A further analysis of the data presented in Table 1 shows that the third issue raised as a cause of the problems with United States public education, that of social/diversity and emotional issues, provides the greatest source of disagreement among the three cohorts. The students ranked this issue as the highest cause, yet in analyzing the data in the aggregate, this issue is ranked as one of the lowest perceived opinions of the faculty and the practicing teachers. This finding could be explained as a result of anxieties felt by the students about cultural issues prior to entering the classroom as student teachers. As stated previously, this university neither requires nor offers a multicultural course. This lack of diversity exposure could have created feelings of unpreparedness and, subsequently, anxiety in students who have little or no experience in classroom situations. The media can also be a contributing factor to the results shown in Table 1. It is not unusual for television or print media to headline stories concerning social problems that occur in the schools, such as gangs and drugs. Rarely does the media discuss a school which has no problems. Students without any formal diversity training, and who are exposed to media coverage of the problems in some schools, have no other source of information to alleviate their anxieties. If student anxiety is the cause of the differences shown in Table 1, this could indicate a need for a required multicultural course in this university's program.

The responses to the fourth and fifth topics presented in Table 1, institutional

issues and educational/pedagogical issues, do not appear to be different among the three groups. This could indicate an agreement by all groups as to the relevance of these issues; however, further research would need to be conducted to give credence to this postulation.

The last column in Table 1 shows the high percentage of missing responses to the questions concerning perceived faculty and practicing teacher solutions to the problems stated. This could be explained in one of two ways. Either the students surveyed believed it was easier to point out a problem than it was to fix it, or the students believed that the solution was obvious as the opposite of the problem. In other words, if the student saw the perceived problem to be one of economics, then the obvious solution would be to raise more money. There would seem no need to react to this particular survey item.

The information shown in Table 2 provides other items of interest. The students surveyed indicated that the three topics they were taught most about were learning styles, teacher expectations and attitudes, and tracking/ability grouping biases. None of these was one of the four types research had recommended be used to change attitudes and behaviors. Of the four instructional methods, only two, role playing and guest speakers, were indicated by 50% or more of the students as being used in their learning about these issues at the university. Therefore, one might conclude that a greater effort should be made to change preexisting attitudes or behaviors.

In further analyzing the students' responses to the types of instruction they had

received, 70.5% of them reported visits to diverse areas within the community were not part of their instruction, yet the coordinators of the methods labs that were conducted at separate sites in public schools, ensured that the students were placed at diverse sites. Apparently, students did not associate their lab sites with visits to diverse communities, possibly indicating a breakdown in communication between students and instructors.

Instruction about teacher expectations and attitudes was an experience reported by 82% of those surveyed. This finding reflects results reported in some of the literature reviewed and could explain the differences observed in Table 1 discussed previously. Researchers had reported that students believed they were receiving instruction on differences in individuals based on gender and race, rather than instruction about how to communicate with individuals despite these differences. Research (Chavez et al., 1994; Chiang, 1994) has also shown that teacher expectations vary depending on the ethnicity of the student and are very exacting for each race, either toward the success or the failure of the student. The fact that the students believed so strongly that social/emotional or diversity issues were the problem, even though the instructors did not, may demonstrate that their teacher education instructors were expressing biased opinions about diversity rather than explaining ways to instruct diverse students. With no diversity course to offer any differing opinions, the teacher education major has no basis to form opinions other than the ones expressed by his or her instructors in other courses. With no classroom experience to show the student otherwise, the student has little choice but to fear the unknown.

Table 3 makes even more prominent the differences in beliefs between cultures. The White students were more focused on one problem, where the nonwhite students seemed to be expressing broader opinions and looked at other issues. One curious point in this discussion arises from the fact that 14% of the students surveyed claimed to have taken a multicultural course in their program. This finding seems to be rather large in a school that offers no such course. The only explanation of this is that the students who reported having had a multicultural course either came from a state where one was required, took such a course on their own, or have a misconception about the definition of a multicultural course. Again, further investigation is recommended.

All of the results and hypotheses discussed previously are limited by a small sample size. Even so, some of the results have shown that the focal issues of this study need further research. It is recommended that in the future, the survey should be administered to a larger test group and include universities where diversity is taught in a special course. It would also be beneficial to expand the study to include the students' reasons for their answers. To expand the implications of this study, students should be surveyed both before and after the student teaching experience. It is possible that students receive the necessary information, but that their lack of experience prevents them from understanding the importance of that information. Surveying them before and after student teaching would help to establish whether the students believe and, indeed, discover they are being appropriately prepared to work with the diverse students they will face.

The curriculum and methodologies education majors encounter as they pursue their degrees prepare them for the difficult task that awaits them. If education majors do not feel confident when entering the classroom, they cannot be effective. The results of this study support those of previous researchers who warn that preservice teachers need diversity training which not only addresses individual and group differences but also helps nurture beliefs and develop skills that will foster opportunities for all school children. Understanding education majors' perceptions is but one of the components necessary to guaranteeing the future of the education of all students in the United States.

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